

**ON
TRACK
OFF
ROAD**





Tony back on top...

Already turning in the air: the style of MX1 World Champion Tony Cairoli is by now unmistakable to many who follow MX Grand Prix racing. The works KTM rider won the Dutch round of the series for the third time on Easter Monday. Who would have thought that a Sicilian would become the premier class sand-master of the MX1 era?

Photo by Ray Archer







Long time coming...

The four-weekend break in the MotoGP calendar after the postponement of the Japanese Grand Prix was the biggest hiatus the sport will have until September. Jerez seems a long time ago. Round three takes place in Portugal this coming weekend and could see some more fun in the wet

Photo by Monster Energy Europe/Milagro



MotoGP







AMA-MX

Holeshot hogging...

The FIM world championship winning KTM 350SX-F has yet to grab a podium result in the AMA SX series but it is no slouch off the gate in spite of the 100cc deficit. Seattle provided yet another sharp curve in an enthralling 2011 road to the SX title and followers of the contest can barely wait to see what will happen in Salt Lake City and Las Vegas

Photo by Steve Cox



MX

GRAND PRIX OF THE NETHERLANDS

VALKENSWAARD · APRIL 25TH (MONDAY)

MX1 winner: Tony Cairoli, KTM
MX2 winner: Jeffrey Herlings, KTM



ORANGE

PEELED

By Adam Wheeler, photos by Ray Archer

If the unbreakable sheen of sunshine that coated Valkenswaard over Easter weekend was a culture-shock for many then the results on the track for the second round of fifteen in the FIM Motocross World Championship were certainly less of a surprise. Previous April conditions at the rippled sandy track have even involved a brief flurry of snow but on this occasion the Dutch Grand Prix was able to bask in an early summer blast, attract its biggest crowd for years and give an impression of a healthy series despite all that is going on in the world of credit and cash.

The results page will show that the works Red Bull Teka KTM team again utterly mastered a Grand Prix, and post-event it was surreal to think that four of the five, slightly diminutive, individuals that crowded around KTM Sport Director Pit Beirer at the team's photo opp on Saturday night were the ones to stamp their authority all over what will be one of the standout 'meets' of the year.

That two of those riders in the Red Bull Station on Saturday owned the MX2 class on Monday was inline with the current formbook. The Valkenswaard podium saw the same three names picking up trophies as in Bulgaria two weeks previously. Instead of Ken Roczen playing the role of pied-piper it was Jeffrey Herlings who unveiled a performance of such stunning speed and superiority in his native Dutch sand that the teenager's display of ability was quite breathtaking (and at times quite scary) to witness.





Herlings leads Max Anstie, but then he led pretty much everyone the whole two days

'I get out of the bed and into this stuff, so I know the sand,' he offered by way of explanation for his second victory in a row at Valkenswaard and second total shut-out of the motos. 'Last year I was a rookie coming here but this time people were saying 'you have to win, you have to win' like winning a grand prix was completely normal,' he added 'so I'm really pumped I could make it happen again.'

Roczen was allowed to lead the second race after Herlings eagerness resulted in a first lap crash but that simply made number 84's path to the front (and to lap only up to eleventh place instead of the tenth of the first race) a little more interesting. The winning margin in the first MX2 moto was a staggering thirty-seven seconds; a more dominant outcome is unlikely to be seen for some time.

Second podium for Searle places the Brit on the early road to title contention



Behind the departing KTMs CLS Kawasaki Monster Energy Pro Circuit's Tommy Searle won a battle with the ever-impressive Bike it Cosworth Wild Wolf Yamaha's Arnaud Tonus to reach his second podium ceremony since his grand prix return and the classification was possible due to Tonus tiring while third in the second race and subsequent fall with just two laps to go. Behind the Swiss in the standings

of the day Gautier Paulin was a noteworthy finisher after the Frenchman pulled into the works Monster Energy Yamaha awning during morning warm-up in tears due to muscle pain in his torso. Painkillers helped the Frenchman obtain decent points. As with any sand GP the surface of the track was as much a character of the race as the riders themselves. Valkenswaard is a curious beast.



Roczen said to his KTM crew after the first moto: 'I need a good start or he'll be gone'. He had the start but it mattered little

The sand is shallow but moves around a lot and presents racers with different options almost every circulation. 'It was difficult here because the lines changed every lap and it was possible to lose or make two-three seconds each time,' offered Monster Energy Yamaha's David Philippaerts who would return to the MX1 podium for the first time since the Grand Prix of Brazil last summer. Despite being well-prepped and maintained this particular circuit

revealed hard and slippery sections, almost as if the grain was a top soil covering hard-pack. This caused a few scratched-heads in practice over tyre choice and suspension settings to search for optimum traction. MX2 provided the 'wow factor' of the Grand Prix but it was again the MX1 boys who served up the entertainment with two-three and sometimes four-way battles occurring for the lead across the two forty minute motos.



Cairoli moved to a new apartment in Lommel, Belgium last year. He might need a bigger place if the cups keep coming like that

Perhaps this should be expected with no less than twelve GP winners in the top fifteen of the final classification.

Tony Cairoli was presented with a trophy almost as big as himself as the World Champion chalked win number three at Valkenswaard and in satisfying conditions considering the Sicilian had needed therapy on stretched knee ligaments after Bulgaria and on Monday morning had sat alongside KTM CEO Stefan Pierer as

the Austrians confirmed '222' would be a factory rider for another two years.

Cairoli aced the first race and team-mate Max Nagl (nursing a painful back) the second but there were parts to play at the front for Philippaerts, factory Yamaha team-mate Steven Frossard and former MX2 winner in the sand now factory Honda rider Rui Goncalves (the Portuguese upstaging Russian team-mate Evgeny Bobryshev).

Frossard (also bottom right) defies expectations to shine on the MX1 stage again. Here leading Nagl





Frossard in particular will leave Holland sore but encouraged after his ride to fourth overall saw him become the first Frenchman to lead the MX1 championship since Mickael Pichon in the middle of the last decade. The 23 year old had crashed while holding pole position on Saturday and the over-the-bars spill had ruptured a collarbone ligament that put the rider on the verge of pulling out of the GP. Hard strapping and no small amount of teeth-grit, coupled with excellent starts meant that the MX1 rookie – previously incapable of efficient sand riding – again captured more than his fill of attention and recognition.

The returning Ben Townley was beaten-up by the track in a long and hard first moto but the New Zealander was able to score points at the site where he took his first career podium on a KTM 125SX in 2002. He now has several weeks to push on with his conditioning before a return to California where he collected a chequered flag last May.

Two weeks separated the Dutch Grand Prix and the start to the campaign in Bulgaria. A gap of three weeks now enters the calendar but the extra time will be well-used with rounds three and four occurring back-to-back in the Americas. National races lie ahead for some, while Ken Roczen will already head Stateside for the final two rounds of the AMA SX series. Glen Helen is set for the second U.S. Grand Prix this century on May 15th.



Valkenswaard was a good GP for Rui Goncalves (999), better for David Philippaerts (19), not so great for Clement Desalle...but for sure better than 2010







Cairolì's starts were better in Holland although he said he needed to 'improve his braking' after getting into the first turn too hot on both occasions




COLOURS AND CALORIES

After the escapade in Bulgaria for the opening round of the championship it was re-assuring to be back on turf a little closer to home and surroundings much more accustomed to Grand Prix motocross in Valkenswaard. The sheer number of entrants for the Veterans' series and also the 100-plus riders for the European MX2 contest meant that the site was full to capacity. The busy circuit already on Saturday (the fact that the motos were being run on a Monday for the first time this century was a bit disorientating) helped create a sparkling vision of the state of the sport with the paddock vibrant with colours, faces, gleaming machinery and a host of people eager to race. Aside from the constant 'brap' of the FIM two-meter max sound test (that curiously, according to some teams, was throwing up some alternative results compared to those recorded in Bulgaria as to the volume of the end cans on the race bikes) the most in-your-face aspect of Valkenswaard under the

fierce Dutch sun was the glaring presence of the energy drink 'war'. Sevlievo two weeks ago had been all about Monster Energy and their heavy new stamp on the championship. In Holland Red Bull was out in force thanks to the KTM link and Rockstar Energy were also prevalent due to the modern new hospitality unit at the disposal of the factory Suzuki team. The Monster rig was detached from the paddock but had a prime spot trackside for the public and was graced by the 'Firestarter' himself, The Prodigy's Keith Flint, on Sunday; words from the self-confessed bike addict will appear in the next issue of OTOR.

The racing itself was another vindication of the depth of the MX1 field and just how hard it will be to regularly post podium finishes in the class. MX2 is an able showcase of developing and outstanding talent but the boys on the 450s (and 350s) are the main source for grizzled racecraft and a load of entertainment before the year's end.





Jeffrey was even better
than he was in 2010

CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

MX1 OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Tony Cairoli, ITA	KTM
2	Max Nagl, GER	KTM
3	David Philippaerts, ITA	Yamaha
4	Steven Frossard, FRA	Yamaha
5	Rui Goncalves, POR	Honda

MX2 OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Jeffrey Herlings, NED	KTM
2	Ken Roczen, GER	KTM
3	Tommy Searle, GBR	Kawasaki
4	Arnaud Tonus, SUI	Yamaha
5	Gautier Paulin, FRA	Yamaha

MX1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 2 OF 15 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Steven Frossard	085
2 Max Nagl	080
3 Clement Desalle	078
4 Tony Cairoli	072
5 David Philippaerts	063

MX2 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 2 OF 15 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Ken Roczen	094
2 Jeffrey Herlings	086
3 Tommy Searle	084
4 Arnaud Tonus	067
5 Gautier Paulin	065

KTM UNVEILED

In a low-key but friendly and informal affair KTM Sport Director Pit Beirer presented the factory Red Bull Teka KTM Racing Team to the press in Valkenswaard. The German briefly mentioned that two of the five riders were walking-wounded – Tony Cairoli with stretched left knee ligaments and Jeremy Van Horebeek with a dislocated right shoulder (and out of action for six weeks at least – but the sight of Cairoli, alongside Ken Roczen, Max Nagl and Jeffrey Herlings showcased some of the very best talent the MX Grand Prix paddock has to offer.

For the motorcycles themselves the large crew were now adjusting to life without the 450SX-F for the first time since the Austrian giants introduced their four-stroke for the premier MX1 category in 2004 (the bike competed in 'MXGP' the forerunner to MX1 in 2003). They were also fielding fuel-injected 250SX-Fs in MX2 for a maiden campaign and Roczen admirably demonstrated the strengths of the

bike with a comprehensive victory in Bulgaria two weeks ago. 'We have worked on delivering stronger performance by small steps. We have made progress with the WP suspension thanks to some new internal components and also had the engine on the dyno and developed the fuel injection with more mappings,' said new Chief Mechanic Dirk Gruebel on the evolution of the title-winning 350; the only machine of its size in the class. 'Tony didn't ask for much and was generally happy with the bike from 2010 but he did want more punch from the engine so that has been our goal.'

'It is weird not to be working on the 450 but it is easier to organise the team with two bikes that are the same and Max did not seem to suffer on those long up-hills in Bulgaria,' he added. 'The 250 has undergone a lot of changes. I think we were losing out in power and torque in the early stages but we are now ahead of the game.'



MATTERLEY BEING MOULDED

Aside from the return to Glen Helen for the second U.S. Grand Prix this century in three weeks the most anticipated round of the FIM world championship is perhaps the visit to Matterley Basin for the British stop on the calendar on August 21st. The unique 'bowl' setting of the circuit outside of Winchester and near England's south coast was last seen hosting the 2006 Motocross of Nations where a record crowd descended across the green slopes.

Preparation begun last week on the site that now has permanent planning permission and track builder Johnny Douglas Hamilton (he of Isle of Wight, Matchams Park and Sun City fame) is there turning over the soil and making adjustments to the layout.

'Johnny and his small crew started last Wednesday and will be there for ten days, mixing the soil deeper for better texture as well as looking at the jumps and corners for better flow,' said GP project leader Steve Dixon. 'Now that we have permission and support from the local council we can prepare well-in-advance and also install things on the site that we previously had to put up and take down in just two weeks. It was a major feat that we managed it at all five years ago in the time scale that we had.'

Tickets for the race, which forms the thirteenth event of fifteen on the 2011 schedule, can now be bought at www.britmxgrandprix.com. Official figures for the '06 Motocross of Nations put the number of spectators last to flatten the grass at Matterley as an immense 80,000.



A dormant Matterley Basin is now coming back to life for the first time in five years. A new gravel paddock has just been laid

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LOOKING AT A GP FUTURE?

Valkenswaard is beginning to establish itself as one of the strongest meetings again and judging by the complexity of the set-up and the burgeoning public enclosures there is something right going on with the organisation.

The increased attendance for 2011 could be down to the fact that Holland will no longer have the status of hosting two rounds of the FIM Motocross World Championship with the replacement of the popular Lierop facility with Gaildorf in Germany.

Last year's paddock gossip indicated that Valkenswaard was a 'Youthstream grand prix' in terms of investment and while this is not entirely accurate I still went along to see President Giuseppe Luongo in Holland on Sunday afternoon after practice in the search of a bit more info. The charismatic Italian is always open for dialogue with the press and this access has helped enormously in the past with some interesting details about the inner-workings of the sport.

I was curious as to the arrangement with the Dutch, and whether Youthstream would be looking at a general shift in their organisational philosophy particularly if the 2011 British Grand Prix is considered. The UK race – along with France – is routinely one of the best attended and therefore one of the most lucrative and has been something of a poisoned chalice since the start of the century with the event changing promotional hands and venues at will. From our chat in Youthstream's office/hospitality Luongo talked about how a different deal has to be found for different countries and situations, sometimes where government

backing is not possible and how the sanctioning fee to run a grand prix must also reflect the economic comparative status in Europe. Youthstream chatted about how they bring greater logistical - and experienced - assistance to the club at Valkenswaard in just their second year of running a GP but of course did not feel the need to be specific about the terms of the deal. The association with Steve Dixon to host the British round at Matterley Basin on August 21st does seem to be deeper (and was presented as much in terms of partnership at the press announcement in Belgium last summer). Luongo commented that he still has to see part of GP fees from no less than three former venues/parties that entertained

Customising deals is nothing unusual...

the UK race. 'We are going in this direction with the British Grand Prix for three reasons. One, to secure the event because there has been no stability and it is an important territory for motocross. Two, to actually get paid for bringing the world championship there and three, to stop all the bad talk about us just going in to 'take and take'. I hope it will work better like this.' Customising deals to clubs, countries, federations or even individuals is nothing unusual but in this current climate of governments slashing public spending (as well as on-going pressure regarding environmental issues) and funding for motorsport activities trickier to find than ever, the process of how a grand prix 'comes to be' is becoming more intriguing.

LORENZO LAUNCHES SECOND BOOK

At the age of 23, MotoGP World Champion Jorge Lorenzo has just launched his second book – the modestly titled – ‘The New King of MotoGP’ that is already on the shelves in Spanish and will be available in English from this week.

The Spaniard printed his ‘My Story’; an autobiography that was also a collection of opinions, philosophies and ideas in early 2009 and has now followed up the account of his young but long career (Lorenzo started in MotoGP on the second day of the 2002 Spanish grand prix which was his 15th birthday) with a picture publication.

With almost 400 images from his childhood to current behind-the-scenes paddock life and even his work with charities, ‘The New King of MotoGP’, is a comprehensive pictorial account of his life that is revealing and frank in places.

Lorenzo – producing here with OTOR’s own Matthew Roberts (Matthew also translated ‘My Story’ from Spanish to English although this new title is English-originated) narrates the tale with memories associated from the photos that act as snapshots into moments of his life.

From one action pic in his 250cc championship days he is reminded of a girlfriend of the time; it is this willingness to open up on personal subjects that already sets the Majorcan apart from the MotoGP crowd (his Twitter account is also phenomenally active); the barrier between road racing athlete and appreciative fan has become slimmer once again.

In a recent press conference in Barcelona Lorenzo half joked that he is unlikely to be working his way up to something like seven books but he enjoys the way that the medium can reach and make contact with the fans.

‘It was a great honour to be asked by Jorge to work with him on the book,’ Matt said. ‘Jorge is a true professional and his attention to detail is incredible - I couldn’t believe how much he could remember of those early 125cc races in particular.’

‘Other athletes might have just signed the contract and taken the cheque but Jorge puts a lot into everything he does for his fans and that is what makes this book special.’



JORGE LORENZO

El nuevo rey de MotoGP

con Matthew Roberts

LIBROS CÚPULA

RIDERS UNDER THE KNIFE

Several riders have been pushing through the pain barrier over the last week or two despite there being no racing. Dani Pedrosa has undergone an operation to remove a titanium plate on his collarbone, the source of much discomfort in the opening two rounds, whilst Cal Crutchlow has also been under the knife to cure arm-pump.

Randy de Puniet has taken advantage of the break to have a screw removed from his knee whilst Loris Capirossi has been undergoing physiotherapy on a shoulder injury. Alvaro Bautista, meanwhile, says he has racked up more than 4,500km on trips from his home in Talavera de la Reina to Madrid for sessions in a hyperbaric chamber as he targets a return to action at Estoril just six weeks after breaking his femur in Qatar. The Spaniard has not confirmed his participation this weekend but has been named on the FIM race entry list.



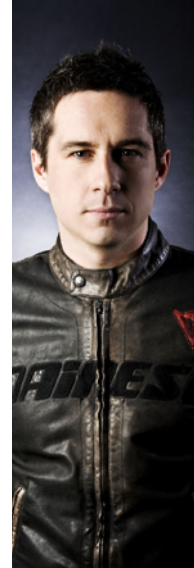
WHAT FOR INDY WITH TEXAS COMING?

MotoGP is set to break ground in 2013 with the announcement of a ten-year contract to bring the series to the new Circuit of the Americas facility in Austin, Texas. The agreement, which includes Moto2 and Moto3, is coupled with a ten-year deal to host Formula 1. Construction of the facility is scheduled for completion in mid 2012.

The agreement casts further doubt over the future of the Indy GP, with Laguna Seca contracted until at least 2014. Indianapolis only signed a single-year extension last season until the end of 2011 although this week the circuit have shown their commitment to the sport by announcing the repaving of the infield track ahead of this year's race.

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THUMB-TWIDDLING...

The recklessness and recriminations from Valentino Rossi and Casey Stoner respectively at Jerez almost three weeks ago reignited a rivalry that has dimmed somewhat since it first exploded in the Corkscrew at Laguna Seca back in 2008 and MotoGP fans are eagerly awaiting the next instalment. Stoner may have a notoriously short fuse but you can guarantee that it will still be burning when we arrive in Portugal late next week.

Likewise Jorge Lorenzo. If it wasn't for the terrible circumstances in Japan I would have been writing this blog from Motegi, the scene of an epic battle between the Spaniard and Rossi last year. That day Lorenzo vowed to wrap up the title and then deal with Rossi yet sadly for us the pair have not yet been competitive on the same day. The progress being made by Jerry Burgess and Ducati should ensure that they are side-by-side very soon.

The relationships between athletes provide human interest in sport for us all. For millions of fans Rossi can do no wrong and the rest are just his rivals but these guys are huge characters and the future of the sport. Mix together the spikiness of Stoner with the histrionics of Lorenzo, the demonic surliness of Dani Pedrosa and the British bulldog spirit of Cal Crutchlow you have a cast that any soap opera would be proud to have on a stage.

In the absence of any actual MotoGP action the virtual racing world went tweet-tastic with the second running of a cult phenomenon: TwitGP. Run by a secret blogger with genuine paddock connections (and no it's not me!) the first TwitGP was held last year when coincidentally the

Grand Prix of Japan was also postponed due to the volcanic ash cloud. It quickly generated almost 5,000 followers with a madcap storyline of past and present MotoGP legends fighting it out on a virtual track designed by Tiff Needell called Twitegi.

The first race was won by Kevin Schwantz by a mouse wheel after a swapping Microsoft Paint with Rossi, Nicky Hayden and Lorenzo, who nearly wi-fisided. You get the idea... After the race the real Lorenzo gamely tweeted: "No way to overtake Mr Brakingman Schwantz... Anyway I was lucky to finish 2nd because I finished the battery just as I was crossing the line."

The virtual racing world went tweet-tastic

Last Sunday night over 10,000 followers were invited to buy a virtual ticket for TwitGP2 by donating money to Save The Children's Japan Earthquake Tsunami Relief fund. The race itself was won by Colin Edwards, who unlike the computer savvy Lorenzo was none-the-wiser to his success, updating his Facebook status on Tuesday with: "Don't get me wrong, I'll occasionally take credit for sh*t I didn't do.....but what is twitgp2 u all are congratulating me for? No clue.....for real. LOL."

If the weather forecasts are correct for Estoril then Colin could have the chance to take an actual win in MotoGP. With rain predicted for qualifying and race day the conditions could be very similar to Jerez so let's hope the drama is too.



FEATURE



FROM THE HORSES' MOUTHS

Three heavyweights from Japanese manufacturers' European divisions give their views on current topics, issues and the future regarding the FIM Motocross World Championship



Photo by Ray Archer

Robert Watherston

Manager of Motorcycle Sport, Honda Motor Europe

There were some comments made in the press not so long ago about the HRC MotoGP team possibly having problems with parts after the natural disaster in Japan. Are there any similar repercussions for Honda's motocross effort?

We are OK at the moment. The reality is that we don't yet know because not all the factories are fully back online in the manufacturing of parts. We can source parts locally if necessary so we should be OK. The question of restructuring everything in Japan and getting everybody back online is not complete yet. We are still seeing different suppliers struggling with re-sources, so it will take some time.

Honda is now back to having a full factory team in the FIM Motocross World Championship after a few unstable years. Was this always the goal from an HME point of view?

Yes, we have been trying to build up the connection with Japan and have been getting more and more support. We are working closely with the Dunlop guys and their R&D in Japan, so that is another step and also closer with Showa for another good step, all taking us towards something a little bit like the factory HRC team of the old days. Unfortunately that kind of structure will never be replicated just because the environment, volume of sales and racing models has changed.

It is a proactive move for Honda because although you continued to race through the last two-three seasons the company has not really been vying for any titles...

Yes. I don't know the details for everyone else but the way our contract structures and investment fell with the economic crisis at the end of 2008 meant that we had to reconfigure our investments and promotion activities. Motocross as much as anything else was cut back heavily. It has been a question of marking time, trying to understand where the market was and where we could invest and what we could do.

Can the phrase 'electric motorcycles' ever be heard in the halls of HME and in particular the racing division?

Yes, there are conversations but no firm decisions. To be honest these are based more in marketing and PR terms and the potential for the future. The reality at the moment is that our business focus is not on the 'fun bikes' as we call them, more on the commuter segment. The bike that we have currently released in Japan is the first step to actually having commercially available models. It is not geared-up to be anything beyond a scooter at this stage. The scope for electric bike racing is enormous and I'm sure at some point we will end up going that way but there is a lot of development required in terms of technologies and sourcing materials for a large scale commercial project. Powering the units, getting the electricity to efficiently charge the batteries, figuring out sustainability. It is a big jigsaw.

There is also the Green issue...

Yes and we always look at it from the total machine life and that starts with the raw materials arriving at the factory and the impact the process has on the local environment. The manufacturing and the recycling is another step and the energy and waste involved.



Photo by Max Zanzani/Nikon

Laurens Klein Koerkamp

Racing Manager, Yamaha Motor Europe

Both of your factory race-bikes in MX1 and MX2 are now fuel injected. Even though the 250 is a prototype it was the next step for Yamaha's off-road machinery wasn't it?

Yeah, obviously for road models we have had it for quite a long time and we have had it on our YZ450F since last year. It is important for Yamaha that when we change something that it is not just a gimmick and offers something extra. This is why when we came with the new 450 we were not the first. I think our carburation engine of 2009 was better than some fuel injected models at the time, so it was vital that we develop new technologies in the proper way, another example is the aluminium frame. I like to think our last steel frame was lighter than some aluminium chassis of the others and this is where we have gone about making sure that our next step is the right one. With the fuel injection now on the YZ250F it is not directly a performance benefit but it can be an advantage that the bike in different conditions is more consistent and user-friendly.

Is there any provisional plan for Yamaha to consider electric motorcycles on a wider scale and eventually seeking to promote through their racing?

For Yamaha we have the EC-03, which is a scooter-type product on the market now and it is important to see the reaction to this. I believe the first media tests took place several weeks ago and the feedback was very positive. So we have to wait and see. For motocross it would mean a big step in another direction for us. It is difficult to forecast what will happen. Electric bikes would be an advantage for MX when it comes to the noise. At the same time a certain level of sound is part of the 'charm' of the sport. Having said that there is still a big on-going effort from the FIM and the manufacturers to have a more reasonable noise level and this is a very important short-term target. We need to ensure that from Monday to Friday on the training tracks that the noise level is more reasonable and this is the biggest challenge for everyone in the sport at the moment, from FIM down to federations to local circuit owners and their way to enforce the rules. It is essential.

Regarding current development...is it a difficult compromise for an off-road bike between noise level and the performance?

It is not too difficult and of course the target is to make sure that the performance level never decreases. On the other-hand the 450s now have a lot of power so that side is not such an issue. For the 250 it is very important to keep the performance level very high and that is where the challenge is bigger. I'm happy to say that so far we have been able to increase performance and reduce noise on the YZ250F.



Photo by Ray Archer

Steve Guttridge

Kawasaki European Race Planning Manager

Has there been any knock-on effect from the natural disaster in Japan in terms of affecting Kawasaki's two major race teams?

So far it hasn't affected us too much. In Japan we have vendors that supply parts to KHI, which is based in the south of the country so fortunately it was not disrupted too much but from a production point of view in the coming months there will be some knock-on effects. Perhaps some short supplies later into the summer.

After the introduction of fuel injection to motocross machinery in the last couple of years what is the next step in terms of technical evolution?

The sound level is a massive priority. The organisers and the FIM must confirm the rules and the dates with which they will change again. It is important that we have those long-term discussions to know that say, for example, the limits will come down again 2013. Our engineers have been able to bring out new and improved models each year in this respect and know what they have to deal with in terms of restrictions. With regards to other new technologies then it just depends on looking at the market and seeing when it might be ready.

What's your current evaluation of the market then in this sense?

I think it needs to settle down a little bit. For motocross I think the FIM have taken the rules in the right direction insofar as keeping the youth classes with two-strokes and from a Kawasaki viewpoint we can continue to develop our products there. The adult bikes have fuel injection but dirt-bikes need to keep their 'grass roots' and keep being affordable. New technology increases the price of everything, and I think with the way the economy still is then we shouldn't be going too wild right now. I think in five years time we might see something very new again.

Any mentions of electric motorcycles yet in KME?

Not really. It depends who you speak to. If you chat to the engineers then it is something they might be thinking about but the priority is very much based around improvements to the current technology, such as FI. For sure in terms of quietening the bikes down a lot more than electric bikes opens a big spectrum for the sport for what could be done with it from a marketing viewpoint, such as going to town centres and in parks. Then again part of the excitement of the sport is the noise; otherwise we would all be doing Trials!



Photo by Ray Archer



AMA-SX

SEATTLE

QWEST FIELD • APRIL 16TH

Supercross winner: James Stewart, Yamaha

SX Lites West winner: Cole Seeley, Honda

NINE...

Words and pics by Steve Cox







Another run-in between title contenders. Ryan Villopoto tries a move through the inside of Chad Reed. Both would run off the track but Reed clung on for third

It seems unbelievable but it's possible that the police trouble that James Stewart got into a few weeks ago has improved his focus at the races. It's as if his legal problems helped him to remember what's really important and he was able to just put things behind him and move forward.

Seattle, was one of his most impressive rides of the year, second probably only to his ride at Anaheim 2. It can't be overstated how technical the track was in Seattle. The whoops were ridiculous and just doubling through rhythm sections was so difficult that the greatest riders in the sport couldn't do it every lap.



Two wins in a row for James Stewart in what has been a late season turnaround and one not many would have expected in recent weeks. No St Louis tears but these 25 points were vital

And jumping the triples? The top guys did it almost every lap, but it was always sketchy. They were leaving the face sideways more often than not.

The thing about Stewart's ride in Seattle is that he made almost no mistakes. I personally didn't see a single error from him. Not even

a sideways jump. It's like he was riding on a different track from the rest of the field. After the race, he said he made one mistake that he could remember, when he dragged his foot-pegs in a rut on the face of a triple and came up short on the jump, casing it. That's it.




Most guys were casing the triples almost every lap.

James Stewart is now only nine points behind Ryan Villopoto for the 2011 championship, so while he doesn't control his own destiny – RV can finish second to him at the final two races and still win the overall title – it's at least look-

ing pretty likely that Stewart can pull off more wins, and where the points fall is just going to be where they fall.

The consistency of Reed and Dungey are also big factors. It sure is a major mix and it will be a fast seven days between Salt Lake and Vegas.

A close-up action shot of Broc Tickle, a professional motocross rider, leaning into a turn on his dirt bike. He is wearing a green and black patterned jersey with "Kawasaki CIRCUIT" and "Monster" logos, a matching helmet with "VANS" and "Monster" branding, and black gloves. The bike's front fender is green and black with the number "20" in large white digits. The background is blurred, showing a dirt track and other riders in the distance.

Broc Tickle leads the West Coast series after team-mate Josh Hansen struggled with a broken hand. With three riders split by 7 points the Lites chase is just as tight

And in the Lites class, it's apparent now that Josh Hansen's injured hand isn't 'all better'. This was not the ideal place to ride with a busted hand, and Hansen did admirably after multiple falls in practice but he wasn't the 'pre-injury' Hansen. He started up front and went backward to sixth, losing the points

lead to third-place finisher and team-mate Broc Tickle. And Tickle will be strong again this week in Salt Lake, where the track will be tricky due to weather yet again. If Hansen feels okay in Vegas, he'll probably win, but it may be too little, too late by that point.

RAIN ON ME...

Seattle is always interesting. It's one of the wettest places in the United States. And somehow the people who built Qwest Field in Seattle, where the NFL Seattle Seahawks play, still built the place without a roof on it.

The story from the Seahawks organization is that the roof was left off so that the Seahawks would have more of a home-field advantage in wet condition. However, the Seahawks' record of the last few years doesn't really bear that out...

The track in Seattle is basically never dry. Even if it doesn't rain on race day, you can bet it's going to rain while the track is being built, or just after and Dirt Wurx, the track builders, always cover the track with plastic in a dumb way, leaving the Tuff Blox on the outside of the track, which makes the inevitable rain water pool in the middle of the course. So, then, when they remove the plastic, the water sits

right in between all of the jumps, in the transitions – exactly where you don't want water to be.

This creates gnarly ruts and really scary landings and take-offs in all of the rhythm sections. The events of the last couple of years were even worse. Although the rain held off for the most part on Friday and Saturday, Feld switched up the dirt for last year's event. In the past, the track was made up of a gravelly road base. It was really dark in color, but it filtered the water really well, so even when it rained, it wasn't too bad. But last year they switched to a more clay-based dirt, which does not soak up. It gets very slick, and although this year's event wasn't as bad as 2010, it was still easily the most technical track of the year.

And, no surprise, the most technically capable racers were the most successful.





AMA-SX CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

AMA SUPERCROSS RESULT

Riders		
1	James Stewart, USA	Yamaha
2	Kevin Windham, USA	Honda
3	Chad Reed, AUS	Honda
4	Ryan Villopoto, USA	Kawasaki
5	Ryan Dungey, USA	Suzuki

AMA SUPERCROSS LITES WEST COAST RESULT

Riders		
1	Cole Seeley, USA	Honda
2	Eli Tomac, USA	Honda
3	Broc Tickle, USA	Kawasaki
4	Kyle Cunningham, USA	Yamaha
5	Tyla Rattray, RSA	Kawasaki

AMA SUPERCROSS STANDINGS (AFTER 15 OF 17 ROUNDS)

Riders		Points
1	Ryan Villopoto	293
2	Chad Reed	287
3	Ryan Dungey	286
4	James Stewart	284
5	Trey Canard	255

AMA SUPERCROSS LITES STANDINGS (AFTER 7 OF 8 ROUNDS)

Riders		Points
1	Broc Tickle	145
2	Josh Hansen	143
3	Eli Tomac	138
4	Cole Seeley	113
5	Ryan Morais	110

CANARD CROCKED

I broke the news the week before Seattle that Trey Canard broke his femur while testing for the outdoors at a local track in Southern California. He was having a great rookie season winning three races – more than anyone but Stewart and Villopoto. But now he's out.

The good news, though, is that he won't be out that long. At the end of the 2008 season, at Washougal, Trey went down while running third late in the second moto and broke his femur. He had a rod put in it and was out for six months, barely making it back in time for the 2009 Lites West.

That rod saved his leg.

The crash happened when Trey was scrubbing this downhill double, but he was going too fast one lap and still over-jumped it, landing sideways in the braking bumps. The bike swapped and tossed him off, and it sounds like on the way over the bike, the handlebar caught his thigh. The rod flexed, cracking his femur, but it didn't stay bent, and the femur fracture should heal in 6-8 weeks, meaning he may be back as early as High Point – round three of the AMA Nationals. And he goes fast at High Point.

It could be that Trey comes back with no pressure and can really just let it fly. If that's the case, the 2010 Lites MX Champ may really put a hurt on the guys this summer.



WILY WINDHAM STILL GOT WHAT IT TAKES

Kevin Windham is 33. That's like 90 in motocross years. And he has a well-earned reputation for his bike-handling skills. Even at his age, when the track is tough, he shines. This was true at Houston early in the season, when he pulled out a massive lead in the main event and definitely would've gone on to win the race. It was extraordinarily slick, and his throttle control is second to none. However, he made an uncharacteristic – and big – mistake and went over the bars, ending his night.

Last year, though, he dominated in Seattle and then in Salt Lake City, it was so gnarly that it snowed. If the race would've gone for 20 laps, he would've lapped second place, Andrew Short. He lapped to third and the race only went 15 laps. Second place was only a few seconds in front of him when the checkered flag flew.

In Seattle this year, he showed it again. He was fastest in qualifying, albeit barely over James Stewart by 3 thousandths of a second. Then, in the main event, he got a bad start and got stuck behind Mike Alessi for a while, but still worked his way up to third, then benefited from a rare fall from Chad Reed in second. Windham got second, his first podium of 2011, and Reed was third.

And we may see Windham race some outdoors this summer, too, as Team Honda – for whom Windham filled-in at the end of the Nationals last year – has no racers for the first two rounds at least, with Josh Grant and Trey Canard both out until at least round three. Windham's golden years have been tough, but to be racing at the top level – the very top – in his 17th season as a pro, that's legendary stuff.



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BACK IN THE SADDLE...

I had a weekend off! It's for Easter, which made me hungry for rabbit for dinner, but after 15 consecutive race weekends, I celebrated by going riding at Pala Raceway for the first time since the series started. Saturday, April 23rd, was the Ian Trettel Ride Day, and I went out there and spent some money to support a good cause.

A lot of the sport's other top guys were out to support the cause, too, with Jake Weimer, Ryan Morais, Broc Tickle, Josh Hansen, Tyla Rattray, Dean Wilson, Blake Baggett, Kyle Chisholm, and many more hitting the track.

But I have to say I'm always amused when I go to the track with some top pros and they end-up surprised that I can ride as well as I can. I mean, in some ways, with the little riding I actually get the chance to do then I'm kind of surprised, too. But at the beginning of the day – literally my first time out on the track, and my first time riding since early January – I followed Tickle and Chisholm out onto the tamed-down Vet layout at Pala and did some goon-riding with them.

We were still going faster than most of the guys out there, and I was riding as fast as I could (at least while having my elbows down and doing ridiculous cross-ups, one-leggers, and really fast one-handers while panic-revving over the jumps) just to keep up with those two, but at the point that they stopped to wait for Wilson's mechanic (and former pro racer) Paul Perebijnos, I pulled up, and that was when they realized who I was.

At the end of the day, Tickle made a point to come over to me and tell me how surprised he was that I could ride 'like that'.

So, what I don't know is whether to take this as a compliment or an insult. Like, is it a compliment because he says I can ride really well? Or is it just that I can ride well for a slightly overweight photographer who gets on a bike 8-10 times per year?

I guess what I'm asking is would it be a compliment to tell someone they look good for their age? Or are you really saying they don't look that good, but for someone who is 60, they look better than most? Oh well. It was fun, and I guess that's the point, isn't it?





BACKPAGE

Lift Off...

The FIM Motocross World Championship carried a heavy flavour of Monster Energy with the first Grand Prix in Bulgaria and the eye-catching promo girls were part of the new GP make-up.

Photo by Ray Archer





'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at **www.otormag.com** every Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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